

IN NELSON'S DAYS

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

H. M. PAULL.

*Author of "The Great Felicidad," "Tenterhooks,"
"The Gentleman Whip," "Merrifield's
Ghost," etc.*

LONDON:
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.,
PUBLISHERS,
89, STRAND.

NEW YORK:
T. HENRY FRENCH,
PUBLISHER,
28, WEST 23RD STREET.

*First Produced under the Management of MR. WEEDON
GROSSMITH, at the Grand Theatre, London, on the
27th April, 1896.*

CHARACTERS.

SQUIRE MARSTON, (<i>Jasper</i>) of the Militia	MR. CHARLES GOODHART.
THE MARQUIS DE VARENNES, (<i>Philippe</i>)	MR. J. REXTON MELTON.
SAMPSON, (<i>An Old Bo'sun</i>)	MR. CHARLES H. FENTON.
LADY RHODA CAREW	MISS HILDA THORPE.
NELLIE CAREW, (<i>her niece</i>)	MISS ANNIE HILL.

TIME.—*An Afternoon in the Spring of 1805.*

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IN NELSON'S DAYS.

SCENE.—*Morning room in the Admiral's house at Sandport on the South Coast. Large French window R. looking on to garden. Fireplace L. Door to Hall R.C. Door to library, L.U.E.. Old fashioned but handsome furniture.*

Lady Rhoda discovered attending to flowers. She is an aristocratic lady of sixty. Gardening hat, &c., on table. Enter Sampson at window; a grizzled, pleasant-looking old sailor, dressed partly as a sailor, partly as a servant.

LADY RHODA. Sampson, I had a letter from the Admiral this morning and he asked after your health.

SAMPSON. My best duty to the Admiral, your ladyship, for recollecting of his old bo'sun, and I'm a sight too hearty to be wasting my time on shore like any land lubber.

RHODA. Nonsense! a wound like yours isn't healed in three months, and you ought to be very glad the Admiral's given you a comfortable home here till you're fit to go to sea again.

SAMPSON. So I am, my lady; but when I know there's fighting going on, I ain't happy somehow unless I'm there to pipe all hands to quarters.

RHODA. But we want you here to protect us when the French land. What's that you've got in your hand?

SAMPSON. It's a letter, my lady. (*Puts it on his hat as a salver and gives it her.*)

RHODA. How did it come?

SAMPSON. A boy from the Sandport Arms just brought it up, my lady. (*Rhoda reads the note, is evidently surprised.*)

RHODA. Where's Miss Carew?

SAMPSON. I was going to ask *you*, my lady: I've got a message for her.

RHODA. (*at window.*) Ah! there she is! climbing down from the may tree. What a girl!

SAMPSON. She's coming, my lady. Ah! she'd come with a wet sail if she knew.

RHODA. What do you mean?

SAMPSON. The Squire have sent her a message. Ah! my lady, I hopes the Admiral will be home in time for the wedding.

RHODA. The wedding? Don't talk idle gossip, Sampson, you let your tongue wag too fast and too often.

(*Enter Nellie.*)

Nellie! What a state your frock is in!

NELLIE. I've been up the may tree to look at the thrush's nest. There are three eggs, such beauties.

RHODA. Suppose visitors were to come!

NELLIE. I can change my frock.

SAMPSON. Beg pardon, Miss Nellie, there *is* a visitor coming. I met Squire Marston over at the battery, and he asked me to give you his best respects and he hoped to come round this afternoon.

NELLIE. Oh, well, I needn't change my frock for Jasper.

SAMPSON. (*aside, going.*) I guess she'll change her name for him though, when he axes her to. (*Exit L.*)

NELLIE. What a formal message! Jasper usually drops in without announcing his visit.

RHODA. Perhaps he may have something special to say.

NELLIE. Do you mean, Auntie, that you think he's going to propose?

RHODA. Suppose he does, what will your answer be?

NELLIE. Don't you think, Auntie dear, that I had better wait till he *does* propose, and then give my answer to him? It would be forward to take for granted that he wants to marry me.

RHODA. Ah, child! don't make light of so serious a thing as the love of a good man. You know he loves you.

NELLIE. He hasn't told me so yet.

RHODA. When he does, remember that he is doing you a great honour. I hope you will accept him, dear, and you know the Admiral would be delighted.

NELLIE. But I'm sure that father would like me to marry to please myself and not to please him.

RHODA. But you like Jasper Marston?

NELLIE. I like him ever so much, but I hope he won't propose.

RHODA. Why? Because you'll refuse him?

NELLIE. No, because I don't know whether I shall refuse or accept him. (*Sees note on table.*) Why, Auntie, who's this from?

RHODA. From an old friend of yours. Listen. (*Reads note.*) "Dear Madam,—Having returned to England, my first duty and pleasure is to call myself to your remembrance. I will do myself the honour of waiting on you this afternoon, and in the meantime remain your obedient servant, Philippe de Varennes."

NELLIE. What! Phil back in Sandport again! He's coming here to-day! Oh, I can't believe it!

RHODA. You seem very delighted.

NELLIE. Of course I am! Why, I haven't seen him for two years.

RHODA. And very rude and ungrateful he's shown himself, I think.

NELLIE. How?

RHODA. In going away so suddenly two years ago, and never sending us a line since. After all the Admiral's kindness too!

NELLIE. Perhaps he has written and the letters have'nt come. America is such a long way off!

RHODA. I wonder what brings him back now.

NELLIE. I don't know! To see me perhaps.

RHODA. To see you?

NELLIE. Why not? He used to come and see me often enough. We were very great friends. I suppose I musn't call him Phil any more now he's grown up, and is a Marquis.

RHODA. Yes, he's a Marquis, and Jasper is only a plain country gentleman. Nellie, would you, an English girl, sooner be a French Marquise than the wife of an English Squire?

NELLIE. There's no harm in proper respect for rank. You think enough of yours.

RHODA. Don't compare the French nobility with the English, please! And a French noble who can't live in his own country too!

NELLIE. It's no disgrace to him if his father was obliged to leave France when that wicked Revolution broke out, and I don't know why you hate Phil so—he's almost English if he *was* born in France.

(*Enter Sampson.*)

SAMPSON. Squire Marston, my lady.

(*Enter Jasper, exit Sampson.*)

NELLIE. Jasper! Who should you think is coming?

JASPER. (*bows to the ladies.*) Must I guess?

NELLIE. An old friend of yours: Phil!

JASPER. You don't say so! Is he back from his wanderings?

NELLIE. Yes, won't you be glad to see him?

JASPER. And you?

NELLIE. I'm delighted.

JASPER. Where has he sprung from?

RHODA. We have no idea. Do you know why he left the village two years ago?

JASPER. He'd been unsettled for some time, and when the old Marquis died, the only tie which bound him to Sandport was broken.

NELLIE. (*aside, indignantly.*) Was it, indeed! How about me?

JASPER. He told me he was going to America.

NELLIE. Do you think he went?

JASPER. I believe that really he was yearning to go back to France, and enter the army; but he couldn't very well tell us so as war was on the point of being declared.

RHODA. I suppose he wanted to get back the family property which was forfeited at the Revolution.

JASPER. Then I'm afraid he's had a hard job.

NELLIE. But he can't have gone to France, or how could he be in England now that we're at war?

JASPER. Exactly: unless he's come with the Emperor's compliments to announce that the invasion is about to take place. (*A distant boom.*)

RHODA. Hark! I thought I heard cannon.

JASPER. (*laughing.*) It isn't the French this time; they're practising at our new battery.

NELLIE. Oh, I hope you're going to keep us safe.

JASPER. We shall do our best. I'm run off my legs with enrolling the Fencibles, arranging for the retreat of the women and children inland, and a thousand other things.

NELLIE. Sampson says you ought to have been a sailor.

JASPER. Why?

NELLIE. Because you're too good to be only in the Militia.

JASPER. That's a compliment indeed, coming from Sampson. He's invaluable amongst the Fencibles; he keeps those lazy fishermen moving in true man-o'-war fashion.

RHODA. (*rises and puts on gardening gloves.*) Do you seriously think there's any danger of the French landing?

JASPER. Quite sufficient to make us very anxious. If they should land——

NELLIE. But Sampson says they can't; they don't know the coast well enough.

JASPER. But they may have spies; we can never tell in what unexpected quarter treachery may lurk.

RHODA. Will you excuse me? I want to look after my plants.

JASPER. (*aside to Rhoda.*) Thank you!

RHODA. (*to Jasper.*) You have my best wishes. (*Aloud.*) Don't go till I've seen you. (*Exit Rhoda, window.*)

JASPER. Did Sampson deliver my message?

NELLIE. Oh, yes, but surely you know us well enough to come without giving us notice.

JASPER. But, perhaps I come too often, and am wearing out my welcome.

NELLIE. You know that Aunt and I are always glad to see you, however often you come.

JASPER. I must either come oftener or stay away altogether. Nellie, you must have seen what has brought me to this house. I am not taking you by surprise: you know I love you, and I've dared to hope that my love was not unwelcome.

NELLIE. I always liked you, as you know.

JASPER. And that liking can't grow into love?

NELLIE. I don't know! I can't tell! Oh, I wish you hadn't said anything, we were such good friends and—and all that.

JASPER. But "all that" is not enough for a man who loves you. And I love you, Nellie, and shall go on loving you whether you love me or not.

NELLIE. I don't want to be unkind; perhaps, someday——(*She stops.*)

JASPER. Then I will wait till "someday."

NELLIE. Yes, yes! I daresay then—but I don't know. Please don't say any more now.

JASPER. Don't be afraid! I am not going to try and *persuade* you into being my wife.

NELLIE. You won't think me unkind, will you?

JASPER. I know it is impossible for you to be that.

NELLIE. I'm not good enough to marry you, I'm not, really!

JASPER. (*smiles.*) I must console myself by trying to believe it.

NELLIE. I'm thoughtless, idle, and vain——

JASPER. Leave it to others to find out your faults.

NELLIE. But I know them so much better than anyone else does !

JASPER. You must increase their number if you wish to frighten away your admirers. (*He stands as if to go.*)

NELLIE. (*holding out hand.*) Goodbye, Jasper ; I'm so sorry. (*Jasper kisses her hand, and goes towards the window.*) Are you going to see Aunt ?

JASPER. She asked me to do so.

NELLIE. Oh ! (*Pause.*) Very well.

JASPER. (*goes towards window, then turns.*) Nellie ! tell me one thing. Is there anyone else ?

NELLIE. You've no right to ask. I won't answer.

JASPER. Is it Phil ? the Marquis ?

NELLIE. What makes you say that ? It's not kind. I didn't think you would behave like that.

JASPER. I apologise ; I was wrong to ask. But you musn't be hard on a rejected suitor, Nellie, even if he is a little jealous and can't help showing it. (*Exit Jasper by window.*)

NELLIE. He doesn't seem to mind so much as I thought he would. If he really loved me very much he would feel it more. He needn't have gone away quite so quickly. He's made me very unhappy. But it isn't his fault. Why must Phil come back just now ? I'd forgotten all about him, almost. *He* never used to go away when I told him to ! but he was only a boy then. He can't have forgotten me though, or why should he come back to see me ?

(*Enter Sampson with card.*)

SAMPSON. A gentleman, Miss Nellie.

NELLIE. (*takes card eagerly.*) Where is he ?

SAMPSON. In the library, Miss.

NELLIE. Don't show him in yet, I must go upstairs. (*Looking at her dress.*) Say, I'll be down in a minute or two.

SAMPSON. Shall I tell her ladyship, Miss ?

NELLIE. No, no. (*Going.*)

SAMPSON. You're quite sure there ain't no mistake, Miss Nellie ?

NELLIE. Mistake ?

SAMPSON. Well Miss, he speaks English right enough, but so far as I could puzzle out that bit of paper, it looks like French lingo.

NELLIE. So it is, of course.

SAMPSON. Then he is a Frenchman, Miss?

NELLIE. Yes, and mind you behave civilly.

SAMPSON. I've got to behave civil to a Mounseer?

NELLIE. Don't be absurd, or I shall be very angry. He's a great friend of mine. So take care! (*Exit Nellie.*)

SAMPSON. Well, shiver my timbers! I never thought I should see a froggy on the Admiral's quarter deck. What would the Admiral say if he was to home! And Missy must titivate before she sees him! She didn't put on her ribbons for the Squire. Has she got a French beau? She needn't invite me to the wedding; I don't hold with Crappos, an underhand, sneaking, spying lot! Thank the Lord I've never known one in my life, and never mean to!

(*Sampson opens door L.*)

SAMPSON. Will you please to walk this way, Sir?

(*Enter Philippe, a handsome young fellow of 22, military bearing, plainly dressed. He carries his hat and cane.*)

SAMPSON. Miss Nellie will be down in a minute, Sir.

PHILIPPE. And Lady Rhoda? Is she at home?

SAMPSON. Yes, Sir, but Miss Nellie told me not to tell her ladyship yet.

PHILIPPE. Indeed! (*Aside.*) Odd! (*Sampson is going.*) I wonder if I could get anything out of this fellow! He may be worth pumping. (*Aloud.*) Is my old friend the Admiral at home?

SAMPSON. No Sir, he isn't! He's away fighting the "parleyvoos"! beg pardon sir, the French I mean.

PHILIPPE. And you'd like to be at them too, I expect; eh?

SAMPSON. Wouldn't I just! begging your pardon again, sir.

PHILIPPE. (*laughs.*) Oh, don't mind me! I am a Frenchman by birth, but England is my adopted country, so we are compatriots, my good friend.

SAMPSON. You don't say so, Sir?

PHILIPPE. "Shiver my timbers, and down with old Boney!" that's it, isn't it?

SAMPSON. Amen to that, Sir. (*Aside.*) What's he so friendly for? And him a Markiss?

PHILIPPE. And how is it you are'n't fighting the frogs with the Admiral, my good man?

SAMPSON. Well, Sir, I'm sort of invalided.

PHILIPPE. Invalided? Why, you look as strong as a horse, my friend. What's the matter with you?

SAMPSON. Well Sir, I've got a plaguey French bullet somewhere in my innards, begging pardon for mentioning it, and it gives me pepper in frosty weather, and most other weather too.

PHILIPPE. So you have to stay idle here instead of doing your duty to your country.

SAMPSON. None so idle, my lord ; I'm in the Fencibles !

PHILIPPE. For the coast defence ? Then you're still afraid lest Boney should get his flotilla across the Channel ?

SAMPSON. Well, we're getting ready for him, the varmint !

PHILIPPE. But there's no landing hereabouts, is there ? even for shallow boats ?

SAMPSON. Is'nt there ? (*Aside.*) Now for a thumping lie. (*Aloud.*) Ah, my Lord, if Boney only knew, there's the finest place on the coast for him hereabouts.

PHILIPPE. Really ? Where ?

SAMPSON. Between Issleton and Sandport, Sir, by Combe Bay.

PHILIPPE. You don't say so. (*Aside.*) 'This garrulous old fool is the very man I want. (*Aloud.*) But are there no batteries to protect the shore ?

SAMPSON. Well, my Lord, there's a set of popguns up on the hill that'll do to play with, but not much else. (*Aside.*) Lord ! What a liar I am !

PHILIPPE. I suppose you know the coast here pretty well.

SAMPSON. Do I know the coast ! Every inch of it ! (*Aside.*) Now we're coming to it !

PHILIPPE. Is'nt there a shoal along the bay ?

SAMPSON. In coorse, Sir ! everybody knows that ; Deadman's Ridge they fishermen call it.

PHILIPPE. Then what's the depth of water over the ridge at ebb tide ?

SAMPSON. Not enough to drown a cat, Sir.

PHILIPPE. And at high tide ?

SAMPSON. A good fathom, Sir. Ah ! If Boney was to come over on a fine night on the top of the tide and just keep clear of Cobham Point, the current would swing them flat bottom boats of his tranquil on to the beach if they was eggshells ! and then we should have Boney living at the Tower instead of King George.

PHILIPPE. Ah well ! that won't happen so long as England has brave men like you to defend her. (*Gives Sampson money.*) Here, drink my health with your comrades, and confusion to the Crappos !

SAMPSON. Thank ye, my Lord. (*Aside, going.*) So he wanted to know the soundings over the shoal, did he? Tried to pump me, did he? He'd better try and pump the Bay of Biscay next time!

(*Exit Sampson.*)

PHILIPPE. (*making notes in pocket book rapidly.*) What a stroke of luck! I've learnt just what I wanted from that old fool, and even with my passport as a friend of the Admiral's, 'twould have been a risky job to have managed by myself. Now I'd better be off as soon as I decently can; must shake hands with these people though. Nellie and I used to be sweethearts, and she evidently remembers it too, worse luck! I can soon disabuse her mind on that point. I've more important things to think of than renewing a boy and girl flirtation; besides, what would Pauline say? Ah! (*Puts away pocket-book.*) When I give the Emperor this information, with what I've already acquired, the old chateau where I played as a child will be mine at last.

(*Enter Nellie, she has changed her gown, put flowers in her hair, &c.*)

NELLIE. (*effusively.*) How do you do? I'm so glad to see you. I'm so sorry I've kept you all this time.

PHILIPPE. (*civilly but quietly.*) Do not mention it, I beg. I hope you are well? I need hardly ask.

NELLIE. (*in a disappointed tone.*) Thank you, I'm very well.

PHILIPPE. And Lady Rhoda?

NELLIE. She's very well too. Won't you sit down? (*She sits. Philippe fetches chair.*)

NELLIE. (*aside.*) How different from what he used to be!

PHILIPPE. (*aside.*) Pity she can't let Pauline show her how to dress her hair. (*Aloud.*) What a long time since we met.

NELLIE. Yes, isn't it? Two years! Where have you been all this while?

PHILIPPE. (*aside.*) I daresay! (*Aloud.*) In South America, looking after some property. You see when my father died I became entitled to the little he still possessed.

NELLIE. We were very anxious about you. Why didn't you write?

PHILIPPE. I had very few opportunities, and I could not suppose that my doings could interest you.

NELLIE. You mean that you had something better to do than think about us and this out of the world village.

PHILIPPE. I assure you I have the pleasantest recollections of Sandport and of the kindness of the Admiral, and Lady Rhoda—and yours.

NELLIE. Thank you! I thought you had forgotten me.

PHILIPPE. (*in an indifferent tone.*) Ah, Miss Carew, that would be impossible!

NELLIE. (*aside.*) I shall cry in a minute, and if he sees me I'll kill myself. (*Aloud.*) I hope we shall see a great deal of you during your stay here.

PHILIPPE. I'm sorry to say my plans are all upset: my lawyers want me in London at once; I must start in half an hour.

NELLIE. But you will come back!

PHILIPPE. I hope so. I'm very sorry to miss the Admiral: I suppose he's away fighting my countrymen?

NELLIE. I'm afraid so. Isn't this war a horrid thing?

PHILIPPE. Terrible.

NELLIE. It's funny to think that as you are French and I English, we ought to hate each other.

PHILIPPE. I fear I can't fulfil my duty in that respect.

NELLIE. Nor can I: 'twould be wicked.

PHILIPPE. You may quiet your conscience by remembering that I'm half English.

NELLIE. Yes. You'll be settling down in England again now, I suppose?

PHILIPPE. I hope to return to France when this war is over.

NELLIE. (*with forced gaiety.*) And settle down there, and marry a French lady, I suppose.

PHILIPPE. It is not impossible, but we won't anticipate the future.

NELLIE. I hope you will be happy, I'm sure.

PHILIPPE. Thank you. (*Rises.*)

NELLIE. You're not going?

PHILIPPE. My time is very limited.

NELLIE. But you must see Aunt, or she'll never forgive you. (*Goes to window.*)

PHILIPPE. (*aside.*) I shall soon give her ladyship the slip.

NELLIE. (*at window.*) Sampson!

SAMPSON. (*outside.*) Yes, Miss.

NELLIE. Where's my Aunt?

(*Enter Sampson by window.*)

SAMPSON. In the Conservatory, Miss.

NELLIE. Alone?

SAMPSON. Yes, Miss.

NELLIE. (*to Philippe.*) Will you come?

PHILIPPE. With pleasure. (*Fetches his hat, but leaves his cane against a chair.*)

NELLIE. (*aside.*) And this is dear old Phil! And I thought he loved me! I could sink through the floor! (*Aloud.*) This way, please.

(*Exit Nellie by window.*)

PHILIPPE. (*aside, following Nellie.*) I don't think even Pauline could be jealous of Nellie now!

(*Exit Philippe.*)

SAMPSON. Humph! So Miss Nellie's got two strings to her bow! Who is this chap? What brings him here? I don't like it, I must talk to the Squire about it. Markiss or no Markiss, that Mounseer's a spy, or I'm a double Dutchman!

(*Enter Jasper.*)

Ah! Squire! I want a word with your honour.

JASPER. Yes. (*Stumbles over Philippe's cane.*) Why, whose cane is that? Who's here?

SAMPSON. My jaws ain't ekil to his name, Squire, but he's come to see Miss Nellie.

JASPER. Who is he?

SAMPSON. He's an old friend of Miss Nellie's it seems. Ah! here's his bit of cardboârd; Markiss of something or other.

JASPER. (*takes card.*) What! Phil! Here already?

SAMPSON. Do *you* know him Sir?

JASPER. Of course: he's an old friend; we were at school together.

SAMPSON. But he's a Frenchman!

JASPER. Only half a Frenchman. (*Aside.*) And he's with Nellie now! Bah! What right have I to be jealous? (*Goes towards window.*)

SAMPSON. Squire!

JASPER. What is it?

SAMPSON. Beg pardon, Sir, but ought'nt we to hand him over to Major Beddoes?

JASPER. Because he's a Frenchman? No, no, we need'nt

go so far as that I'm glad to say. I daresay he's as good an Englishman as you almost. (*Going.*)

SAMPSON. Stop, Squire, wait a minute.

JASPER. What *is* the matter?

SAMPSON. That Frenchman's a spy, sir.

JASPER. Nonsense! You've the spy fever on you, a common complaint on the coast just now.

SAMPSON. Cap'n, Squire I mean: it's gospel truth.

JASPER. What makes you say so?

SAMPSON. This way, Squire. When he comes in it was "Hail, shipmate," and "Shiver my timbers," and "When are you going to lick the French frogs?" till 'twas more nor natural in a born Frenchman.

JASPER. But I tell you—

SAMPSON. Hear me out, Squire. What if I tell you he got asking me questions about the invasion?

JASPER. What sort of questions?

SAMPSON. About the batteries, and whether there's depth of water in the bay for flat-bottomed boats, and the set of the tide, and all that.

JASPER. He asked you that?

SAMPSON. Ay sir, that he did, and then he gave me this, (*shows money*) and I'll ram it down his throat before I've done with him.

(Jasper walks up and down the room perplexed.)

SAMPSON. *Now*, Squire, what do you say?

JASPER. I don't know what to say. We may be wronging him,—I hope so from my soul,—but I hesitate to risk anything with this invasion threatening us.

SAMPSON. Then I'll just——

JASPER. No, no! do nothing till I order you. I will see him and then I can tell better what to do.

SAMPSON. If you let him go, sir, the mischief's done.

JASPER. You don't understand; we're old friends, I can't accuse him without proof, or at least good grounds for suspicion.

SAMPSON. No need for you to say a word, Squire; just let me run up to the Battery and give a hint to Major Beddoes and he'll do the rest; nobody need never know you had a finger in the pie.

JASPER. No, it's *my* duty, and I mustn't shirk it. You be in the library when I question him; if I'm not satisfied with his answers I'll knock over a chair or let something drop, and you can come in then and give me your assistance if necessary.

SAMPSON. But s'pose he's slipped away already by the garden gate?

JASPER. He must come back here for his cane. Now go, he mustn't see us together.

SAMPSON. Right, Squire! I'll be ready—and willing.

(Exit Sampson.)

JASPER. Can Sampson have been mistaken? It's possible, but I can't run the risk? Phil will take my questions as an insult, of course, and at the best 'twill end in a duel, but it can't be helped. If I make a mistake I must take the consequences.

(Jasper is at the back. Enter Philippe from garden, he does not see Jasper.)

PHILIPPE. I've shaken the old lady off at last, thank goodness, now I can be off! Where's my cane?

JASPER. *(coming down.)* Why, Phil, is that you?

PHILIPPE. Jasper! You here? *(Aside.)* Confound!

JASPER. Did't the ladies tell you I was here?

PHILIPPE. No.

JASPER. They must have thought I'd gone. Sit down and let's have a chat.

PHILIPPE. I'm afraid I have'nt time. I'm off to London at once, but next week——

JASPER. Come! two minutes after two years' absence won't hurt.

PHILIPPE. *(aside, as he sits.)* Old friends are a nuisance sometimes. *(Places hat on table.)*

JASPER. And where have you been all this time?

PHILIPPE. In South America.

JASPER. Not in France then?

PHILIPPE. No: why?

JASPER. I thought you meant to try and recover the family property.

PHILIPPE. Oh, that's past praying for.

JASPER. And what brings you back to England?

PHILIPPE. Where else can I go, with France closed to me? I found myself in this neighbourhood, so I thought it only civil to call here after the kindness the Admiral showed my father and myself.

JASPER. You had no other motive?

PHILIPPE. *(uneasily.)* What do you mean?

JASPER. Was there no special reason for your visit?

PHILIPPE. *(laughing.)* You mean Nellie? I've out-grown that boyish folly long ago. I remember, we used to be rivals; are you still worshipping at that shrine?

JASPER. I am. May I ask you to recollect it?

PHILIPPE. My dear Jasper, don't let us quarrel when there's no cause: perhaps it will relieve your mind when I tell you I am shortly to be married to a charming lady of the Empress's Court, Mademoiselle de St. Maurice.

JASPER. I congratulate you. But when did you become engaged to her, if you have been in South America since you left England?

PHILIPPE. My dear fellow, you forget that in France these affairs are arranged by the families of the happy couple.

JASPER. Then you've never seen her?

PHILIPPE. Not yet.

JASPER. (*aside.*) Lies! His very hat betrays him.

PHILIPPE. (*aside.*) Fool I was to mention Pauline!
(*Aloud.*) And now I must be off: I've only just time to get my valise from the inn and catch the coach for London; so goodbye. (*Holds out hand.*)

JASPER. (*drawing back.*) Wait a moment.

PHILIPPE. What is it?

JASPER. I find it difficult to put into words. I am organising the defence of the coast against the expected invasion; I hold a commission in the Militia.

PHILIPPE. My dear fellow, what's all this about? What interest have I in these matters?

JASPER. Enough to make you question that old sailor who showed you in.

PHILIPPE. (*starts slightly, then recovers himself.*) That old British tar? (*Laughs.*) I couldn't get him to stop talking about Boney and the Fencibles and heaven knows what till I gave him a crown to get rid of him. I wish you all success against Napoleon, though I'm too much of a Frenchman to volunteer on your side I confess. But we needn't be enemies because King George and the Emperor are. So now——

JASPER. No! stop.

PHILIPPE. (*pause.*) My dear Jasper, be careful. I pretended not to understand your hints just now; if you repeat them I shan't be able to misunderstand them again.

JASPER. I will give you more than hints. I have reason to believe that you are here as a spy.

PHILIPPE. (*about to break out, but restraining himself.*) May I ask the grounds of your suspicion?

JASPER. Grounds enough in all conscience! You say you have not been in France, yet you are engaged to a lady in Paris; your hat comes from the Rue de St. Honoré,

the name is inside it ; you intrigued with the Admiral's servant till he told you the set of the tide, the position of the shoal, who knows what else ?

PHILIPPE. And you ground such an accusation against me on trifles like these ? Enough ! I shall still be able to find some old friend in the village who for my father's sake will bring you a message from me.

JASPER. Stop ! You can't go now ; I've gone too far to stop. Phil, you don't know what this is costing me ; help me out, for pity's sake.

PHILIPPE. What do you mean ?

JASPER. If I did my duty I should hand you over to the authorities instantly, but I will stretch a point for the sake of our old friendship. You are a French gentleman, your word is sacred ; tell me, on your honour, that you are not a spy and I'll believe you.

PHILIPPE. I will not defend myself against an insult by a denial. My sword shall answer for me.

JASPER. Phil, I only ask a word ; for heaven's sake give it.

PHILIPPE. Are you quite sure that your jealousy hasn't something to do with your readiness to suspect me ?

JASPER. (*pause.*) Then you won't give me your word ?

PHILIPPE. No !

JASPER. Then you leave me no choice.

(*Jasper knocks over a chair. Enter Sampson, who advances on tip-toe towards Philippe unseen by Philippe.*)

PHILIPPE. Are you going to attempt to stop me by force ?

JASPER. I must.

PHILIPPE. Then don't hold me responsible for the consequences.

(*Sampson seizes Philippe from behind and pinions his arms.*)

PHILIPPE. Let me go, you scoundrel. (*Struggles.*)

SAMPSON. When the squire gives the word, sir. Better keep still, sir, and then I shan't have to squeeze you so tight. (*Philippe ceases to struggle.*)

PHILIPPE. (*to Jasper.*) Mr. Marston, is it by your orders this fellow has offered me this outrage ?

JASPER. It is ; you left me no alternative.

(*During the next few sentences Jasper goes to the two doors and locks them.*)

PHILIPPE. I see : it's less risky than meeting me like a gentleman.

JASPER. If I let you go away, the mischief's done.

PHILIPPE. You shall repent this deeply, though your time for repentance shall be short.

JASPER. (*finishing locking the doors.*) We shan't be disturbed by the servants now.

PHILIPPE. You are a coward, sir, a miserable coward !

JASPER. If my suspicions prove unfounded I shall offer you my humblest apologies, and give you any satisfaction you may demand. But in the meantime—(*advances to Philippe.*)

PHILIPPE. What are you going to do ?

JASPER. Search you.

PHILIPPE. Hands off ! I will see if Lady Rhoda will let a guest in her house—

JASPER. Do you wish me to search you in her presence ?

SAMPSON. Keep steady, now, sir.

(*Jasper takes out Philippe's pocket-book and papers.*)

PHILIPPE. Since when have you become a pickpocket ?

JASPER. (*looking at papers.*) Since you became a spy. (*Inspecting papers, &c.*) So you hold a commission in the French army, I see. What's this ? notes as to the coast, shoal water—

SAMPSON. That's what he got out of me, Sir.

JASPER. But I don't understand : what do they mean ?

SAMPSON. Nothing, sir. D'y'e think I was fool enough to tell the truth to a Frenchman ?

JASPER. I see. Still, they're evidence. (*Takes out small packet.*)

PHILIPPE. Don't touch those ; they're private.

JASPER. Not more so than what I've already seen, I imagine. (*Reads.*) So you've been in England a week, passing as an Englishman.

SAMPSON. What damned impudence !

PHILIPPE. You've satisfied yourself now, I suppose, and found what you wanted ; if so, you might tell this bear to hug me a little less ferociously.

JASPER. I think, Sampson,—

SAMPSON. Don't, sir ; he means mischief ; I feel a pistol under his coat.

JASPER. Do you ? (*Searching.*) Quite right, and papers in the lining of the coat. (*Places pistol on table a little way off.*) I can leave those till we're more at leisure ; I've enough for my purpose.

SAMPSON. Now, Squire, if you'll be so good, I want you to put you hand in *my* pocket and pull out a crown this gentleman gave me for my information.

JASPER. (*does so.*) Is this it?

SAMPSON. Thank you, sir; now just take my place a moment whilst I ram it down his throat.

RHODA. (*outside.*) Sampson! Sampson! where are you?

SAMPSON. Here, my lady.

(*Jasper silences him, is going towards window when enter Rhoda by window.*)

RHODA. Sampson! Mr. Marston! what does this mean?

Enter Nellie.

JASPER. Please go away; something very painful has happened.

NELLIE. Why is Sampson——

JASPER. Really——

RHODA. No; I must know what has occurred to justify this insult to a guest.

NELLIE. Sampson, how dare you?

SAMPSON. Squire's orders, my lady.

PHILIPPE. (*to Jasper.*) Are you so anxious to humiliate me in the eyes of these ladies?

JASPER. If you will give me your parole not to attempt to escape——

PHILIPPE. Yes, yes; I give you my word of honour.

JASPER. Sampson, let go. (*Sampson does so unwillingly, and falls back.*)

RHODA. Now, Mr. Marston, I am waiting an explanation.

JASPER. Which I give with the greatest reluctance. The Marquis, who is an officer in the French army, has come here to seek information which will facilitate the landing of the invading fleet; trusting to his knowledge of the language and his acquaintance with you to escape detection. These papers show his object and his intimate relations with the Emperor, who has promised him the forfeited family estates as his reward if successful.

NELLIE. A spy! No! I won't believe it!

RHODA. Then the object of your visit here was——

PHILIPPE. Not what you imagined. (*Sarcastically.*) Unfortunately I am betrothed to Mlle. de St. Maurice, but I've no doubt my good friend here will console you for my defection.

NELLIE. (*aside.*) The coward! How I hate him!

RHODA. I can believe *now* that you are a spy.

PHILIPPE. All's fair in love and war, madam; it's an old adage.

(Jasper has been looking through papers.)

JASPER. Sampson, go to the library and fetch me some foolscap and sealing wax.

SAMPSON. Aye, aye, sir !

(Exit Sampson.)

RHODA. *(to Jasper.)* But he may take the opportunity to try to escape.

PHILIPPE. It is ungenerous, madam, to insult a fallen foe. You forget I gave my word.

RHODA. What is the word of a spy worth ?

PHILIPPE. A spy ? What is there dishonourable in risking my life for my country ? Why, the Admiral you all worship got his first ship for a similar deed to mine.

RHODA. No ; he never betrayed a family whose hospitality he had enjoyed.

PHILIPPE. I forgot. Of course, an English spy is honourable, and a French one contemptible. *(Shrugs his shoulders.)*

NELLIE. *(aside.)* Yes, he is ! and I thought I loved him.

JASPER. *(who has looked through papers, gives back some to Philippe.)* I can return you these : the rest I must keep.

(Enter Sampson with paper, wax, etc.)

JASPER. *(fastening up the papers in a parcel, and sealing them.)* I don't think there is anything more to be said ; we can start when I have sealed up this packet.

RHODA. What are you going to do with him ?

JASPER. Hand him over to the authorities.

RHODA. And what will they do ?

JASPER. That is for them to decide.

NELLIE. Jasper ! what will they do ?

JASPER. It is not a matter for me to interfere in ; I have only to do my duty.

PHILIPPE. Don't be anxious about me, I beg ; though I'm afraid I shall not be able to pay you my promised visit next week.

NELLIE. You mean you will be in prison ?

PHILIPPE. I hope so, but I fear not.

RHODA. They will shoot you ?

PHILIPPE. Probably. But it can't be helped ; better men than I have died for France.

NELLIE. He musn't be shot ; he shan't ! it's horrible, it's wicked !

SAMPSON. Make your mind easy, Miss Nellie ; he won't be shot.

RHODA. What do you mean, man ?

SAMPSON. They don't shoot spies, my lady.

JASPER. (*angrily.*) Hold your tongue, will you ?

PHILIPPE. (*terrified.*) They'll hang me ! No ! they daren't ! I'm an officer. (*Jasper tries to make Rhoda and Nellie go.*) For God's sake, Jasper, let me die like a man and not like a dog.

RHODA. Mr. Marston, can't you do something ? It seems too horrible.

JASPER. What can I do ? Do you think that if there were a way out of it I wouldn't jump at it ?

NELLIE. Then find one ! What if he is a spy ? If you send him to be killed it is you who kill him ! You !

JASPER. For pity's sake don't make my duty harder than it is. I'd give ten years of my life to have been spared this, but I've no choice.

PHILIPPE. Of course not. Come, let's end this business : I'm ready.

JASPER. (*to Philippe.*) As you have given me your parole not to attempt to escape, (*Philippe bows.*) I will ask Lady Rhoda to lend me her carriage and spare you publicity.

RHODA. Certainly ; I will order it. (*Jasper unlocks door. Exit Rhoda.*)

JASPER. Sampson, step over to the Sandport Arms and bring the Marquis's luggage here as soon as you can.

SAMPSON. Will you give me a scrap of writing, Sir ? or they may make trouble about it.

JASPER. (*writes on a scrap of paper, Sampson is standing with his back to Philippe between Jasper and Philippe, Nellie has edged near to Philippe.*)

NELLIE. (*aside to Philippe.*) Quick ! the window ! you know the orchard gate, here's the key.

PHILIPPE. No ! don't tempt me ! I am on parole.

NELLIE. Never mind that ! you must break your parole.

PHILIPPE. Impossible !

NELLIE. But they will hang you !

PHILIPPE. (*sees his pistol.*) Ah !

NELLIE. What is it ? (*Philippe takes up pistol. Nellie frightened.*)

PHILIPPE. Don't be afraid, it is for myself. Now let them do their worst ! I shall die like a soldier !

NELLIE. No ! No !

PHILIPPE. Hush! Don't betray me. (*Moves quietly towards window, stops, gives packet to Nellie.*) Send these to poor Pauline, tell her I died like a brave man. Good-bye!

(*Enter Rhoda.*)

JASPER. (*giving note to Sampson.*) Here!

RHODA. (*seeing Philippe at window.*) Jasper! look!

(*Exit Philippe by window.*)

JASPER. Ah! Stop him!

SAMPSON. The villain! (*Sampson and Jasper rush to window; Nellie throws her arms round Jasper.*)

(*Exit Sampson.*)

NELLIE. No! It's no use!

JASPER. Let me go! (*Struggles free. A shot heard outside.*)

(*Exit Jasper.*)

NELLIE. Ah! (*Rhoda supports her and places her in chair.*)

RHODA. What is it?

NELLIE. He has shot himself.

RHODA. No! don't say that! (*Hurries to window.*)

(*Enter Jasper by window: he stops Rhoda.*)

RHODA. Is he dead? (*Jasper bows in acquiescence: Nellie sobbing with her face in her hands.*)

Curtain.